

Worcester Jobs Fund Oversight Committee

May 25, 2023

10:00 a.m.

Via WebEx

Meeting Minutes

WJF Oversight Committee Attendance: Karen Pelletier, Fred Taylor, Ruth Seward, Sandy Ellis, Jeff Turgeon, Roberto Diaz

WJF Guest Attendance:

WJF Staff Attendance: Arianna Drummy, Anh Dao

- The meeting was called to order after a quorum was established at 10:03 am.

Welcome and Introductions

Committee members introduced themselves and welcomed new member, S Ellis. S Ellis introduced herself as the community organizer for the central region of the Massachusetts Nurses' Association. She works with regional nurses and her organization is part of the Worcester Community Labor Coalition.

Approval of March 23, 2023 Meeting Minutes

J Turgeon made a motion to approve the minutes, the motion was seconded. A vote was made and the motion passed.

Approval of April 27, 2023 Meeting Minutes:

K Pelletier proposed edits to the section discussing committee vacancies for brevity. She expressed concerns regarding the language being misinterpreted. R Diaz made a motion to approve the minutes as edited, the motion was seconded. A vote was taken and the motion passed.

ARPA Update:

A Drummy shared that the committee met in person to review ARPA applications and their scores. A Drummy then reached out to applicants with follow up questions and the committee then met again virtually to debrief. A Drummy expressed apprehension around sharing the final decisions for ARPA awards due to conflicts of interest. J Turgeon confirmed that the committee made recommendations and there should be no problem with sharing those decisions as long as parties with conflicted interests abstain from discussion and voting. K Pelletier noted that all applicants should be prepared for the possibility of not receiving any funding but there should be no issue with waiting to find out with the general public. J Turgeon asked if the committee is comfortable with the ARPA review committee sending recommendations directly to P Dunn rather than sharing them with the whole committee to be fairer to applicants that are not a part of the WJF committee. A Drummy, F Taylor and R Diaz agreed that would be fair. R Seward inquired when applicants would find out if they were awarded funding. A Drummy replied she would confirm with P Dunn once they submit their recommendations and find out if she would be the person to follow up with applicants.

CDMC Vacancies:

The City of Worcester does not discriminate on the basis of disability, The MCRWB will provide auxiliary aids and service, written materials in alternative formats, and reasonable modifications in policies and procedures to persons with disabilities upon advance request. Please contact Arianna Drummy at drummyaj@MassHireCentral.com or 508-373-7641, or the ADA Coordinator at disabilities@worcesterma.gov.

F Taylor shared events at the last CDMC meeting where no quorum was reached and the meeting was adjourned early. He noted that the meeting date had been changed and committee members can not always commit to the new schedule. He proposed changing the date back and noted that he is confident their vacancies will be filled, especially considering the committee will take a break in July. The Community Labor Coalition will need time to choose an appropriate representative.

WJF Financial Update:

A Drummy met with Carlene to discuss the budget. There are a few outstanding invoices that need to be paid so there are no concerns about spending down the remaining money. She also noted that since she used Washington Square funding to pay for some of the EPA stipends, any leftover money in WJF can be carried over to Washington Square to replenish that fund. A Drummy reviewed the DOT budget that has about 10 grand remaining. That money will be carried over to the next fiscal year, so she recommends recruiting for 12 participants instead of 10 for the next Building Pathways cohort. She reviewed the remaining funds in Washington Square.

WJF Program Update:

A Drummy reviewed total program enrollments, student demographics and pre and post training statistics. F Taylor requested she create a snapshot to compare these statistics to FY 22. A Drummy reviewed FY 23 training participants. All current CCMA graduates have been placed, 6 out of 7 Phlebotomy graduates have been placed and all current school bus graduates have been offered jobs with the Worcester Public Schools. As for Building Pathways, two students have been placed. A Drummy provided a breakdown about the CDL A and B programs. She then shared notes from a meeting staff had with a DOT representative. We learned that on average across the state, it takes people about 3 attempts at the road test to pass. In addition, the test is changing positively in October. Students will be given a pre-trip inspection check list and the maneuvers portion will be streamlined so that the maneuvers students have to perform will transition from one to another. A Drummy shared that we are reconsidering the NETTTS contract and will consider Parker if they show improved results.

A Drummy shared that three students from the January cohort will be going for their fifth attempt this week. She is concerned because individuals only have 6 attempts and will have to wait a year once those attempts have been used.

A Drummy reviewed the spring CCMA cohort. There are 7 students but 2 students will not be able to go to externship until they have work authorization. She noted that this cohort was challenging which she suspects to be in part due to the change in instructor a few weeks through. The spring Phlebotomy cohort is doing extremely well and are on track to start their externships in a few weeks.

School bus participants are proceeding and many students have been offered positions as bus monitors. A Drummy commented she noticed improvements and liked how the class took place over February vacation. She will discuss with W Cardwell from the transportation department and find out if they need more bus drivers.

The Worcester Jobs Fund ran 7 trainings in FY 23 and enrolled 98 participants.

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FY 24 Planning:

A Drummy shared program planning for the next fiscal year. Staff will run another CDL B program for 5 participants in August that will be co-enrolled with a MassHire Donnelly grant. There will be two CCMA cohorts enrolling 16 participants. She is planning to run one more Phlebotomy program in the fall enrolling 5 students. They plan to draw back on this program because it has been difficult to secure local externships and formulate an externship to employment pipeline. R Seward commented that it has been difficult to broker a connection with some of these conglomerates such as Quest and Labcorp that contract with major healthcare providers in the area. K Pelletier commented that she's heard traveling phlebotomists can make relatively high wages. A Dao added that she's noticed a challenge in specifically finding entry-level phlebotomy positions. R Seward agreed and emphasized the importance of an externship to employment pipeline because agencies would be more willing to hire folks they have experience working with. S Ellis noted that this is an issue across the healthcare industry and warrants further conversation and outreach to break through. A Drummy shared that the WJF and Night Life has had talks with UMass about running a pilot Pharmacy Tech program.

Member Announcements

F Taylor shared a Juneteenth festival will take place June 17th at Institute Park. The annual Frederick Douglass reading will take place June 30th.

K Pelletier asked the committee when a good time would be for the committee to meet, set a budget and plan for programming in FY 24. A Drummy replied we could talk about the budget we'd want to set specifically for training at next month's meeting. Committee members also discussed when a good time would be to reach out to City Council members.

K Pelletier mentioned that previous WJF staff would help students enroll in SNAP benefits and proposed we bring it back. J Turgeon mentioned that there is Career Center staff and outside agencies that work with SNAP enrollments. Staff could get trained to become SNAP beneficiaries but in the past they've found that it took more time and resources than we were being reimbursed for. A Drummy added that we currently ask applicants if they receive any benefits and provide resources and referrals if they need it, but at this time there does not seem to be a huge demand in that area. She recognized however that it would be beneficial to receive this training.

Adjourn:

- A motion was made to adjourn at 11:03 AM.

Respectfully submitted by Anh Dao

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